

## **Straight from the horse's mouth: children's reception of dubbed animated films in Spain**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Reception studies in the field of audiovisual translation (AVT) have increased considerably in the last two decades, including the target viewer in the picture. This paper presents the results of a study exploring young children's reactions to some of the translation strategies regularly adopted in dubbed animated films. A total of 163 participants were shown nine animated film clips dubbed from English into Spanish, which included cultural references, colloquial language, educational content and songs. Data were then collected through a questionnaire adapted to the participants' level of cognitive development and the analysis was based on two independent variables: the participants' year in school and the number of previous viewings of the films. The results show that children do not seem to have much trouble understanding cultural, educational and musical content that is specific to the source culture and is kept in the target text. Interestingly, having previously watched the films does not appear to be a determining factor in children's ability to identify these elements.

### **KEYWORDS**

Reception, dubbing, audiovisual translation, children's films, dual audience, experimental study.

## **1. Introduction**

After a hesitant start at the turn of the last century, scholars' interest in the reception of translated audiovisual texts is now at its peak. The application of experimental methods specific to social sciences, such as questionnaires, surveys and interviews, accompanied by technological tools like eye trackers, has given researchers new tools to explore the way in which audiences receive translated audiovisual texts. Some of the topics investigated include the understanding and appreciation of cultural references (Bucaria and Chiaro 2007; Antonini 2008) and translated humour (Fuentes Luque 2003; Rossato and Chiaro 2010), the similarities and discrepancies between professional and non-professional subtitles (Orrego Carmona 2016), the audience preference for one specific AVT mode over another (González Ruiz and Cruz García 2007; Matamala *et al.* 2017), and the influence that dubbing actors' voice and performance can have on character perception in dubbed programmes (Palencia Villa 2002), to name but a few. Regarding media accessibility for people with sensory impairments, interest has primarily focused on audience response to quality standards in both subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (Zárate and Eliahoo 2014; Szarkowska *et al.* 2016; Tamayo and Chaume 2017) and audio description for the blind and the partially sighted (Orero and Chmiel 2012; Chmiel and Mazur 2016).

Less attention has been paid, however, to children's reception of AVT productions, despite the fact that children are one of the main target audiences in the entertainment industry, and such studies as there are have dealt almost exclusively with media accessibility (Zárate 2014; Tamayo 2015; Palomo 2016). In order to appeal to adults accompanying younger viewers to the cinema or buying the films, audiovisual material targeted at children often includes linguistic and non-linguistic elements and references that only people with a more developed cognitive ability can understand. Given this circumstance, the following research question arises: as direct recipients of animated films, are children able to understand the specific content included in the dubbed versions of these films, in particular when it comes to references that may be more targeted to the adult audience?

This paper sets out to explore children's perception of an audiovisual programme, which may be affected by some of the translation choices made throughout the dubbing process, such as the non-explicitation of educational content, the foreignisation/domestication of cultural references or the non-translation of plot-related songs. Drawing on previous research, the main challenges encountered when translating audiovisual productions for children are described. The focus then shifts to the design of an experimental study based on participants' responses to some of the translation solutions frequently found in children's films dubbed from English into Spanish, paying attention to the variables considered, the participant sample and the selection of materials. Finally, the results of the experiment are presented and discussed.

## **2. The dubbing of animated films for children**

The translation of animated films for children differs slightly from that of other cinematographic genres. As in the case of any other audiovisual text, the information is conveyed by the different semiotic codes that make up the audiovisual production, not only the linguistic one (Chaume 2004). Yet, the translation is also influenced by the end-users' assumed characteristics and abilities and, for instance, tends to feature short sentences with simple structures in a standard variety of language (Barambones 2012). In this sense, dubbing is always the preferred AVT mode when dealing with children's programmes, essentially because young children are not able to read subtitles. However, the target text (TT) must be able to both consider children's skills and appeal to a dual audience made up of adults and children. Since part of the message is clearly aimed at an older audience, the translator needs to take proper account of this content if the intended effect is to be successfully transferred (Zabalbeascoa 2000). At the same time, elements that are specific to children's films should also make it into the translation, such as colloquial expressions, children's lexis, figurative language, educational content as well as certain cultural and intertextual references.

In a previous study focused on a descriptive analysis of the translation strategies and techniques applied in the dubbing from English into Spanish of six recent animated films, a classification of translation patterns was established (de los Reyes Lozano 2017). Among these trends, and in line with previous and subsequent observations (Lorenzo 2005; Iglesias 2009; Martín Fernández 2018), it was found that foreignisation was the main translation method activated for the transfer of cultural references (75% of the cases), and that the use of explicitation (understood as the strategy of adding clarifications or explanations to the TT, according to Barambones 2012: 86) was not very common (6%) when translating cultural and intertextual references or educational content; the reason being the near impossibility of adding new information to the dialogue track. As regards the interaction between the various cinematographic codes, the relationship of complementarity that exists between the linguistic and the iconographic codes (González Vera 2011) is usually maintained in the TTs for synchronisation purposes. Finally, it was noted that songs are only translated if they fulfil a diegetic function.

### **3. Method**

As stated in the introduction, the research question guiding this study is the following: being direct recipients of animated films, do children understand the specific content that may be targeted at the adult audience in the dubbed versions of these films? To answer this question, an experiment was carried out based on the instrumental method of analysis developed by Rodríguez Bravo (2003) in the field of communication studies. The main goal was to empirically gauge the reaction of young cinemagoers when confronted with some of the translation solutions regularly adopted in dubbed animated films. Among other steps, the experiment required the establishment of a list of dependent and independent variables, the recruitment of an appropriate sample of participants, the selection of some illustrative clips from a corpus of dubbed animated films for children, and the design of a pen-and-paper questionnaire aimed at assessing the children's comprehension of the clips.

The main hypothesis was as follows: when dubbing, the degree of TT adaptation plays a decisive role in children's reception of cultural references, colloquial language, educational content and songs. Given that children's films are aimed at audiences with different levels of cognitive development, four sub-hypotheses were established to focus on certain specific variables, as follows:

1. Since no additional information is usually provided in dubbing to clarify intercultural, linguistic and encyclopaedic content, younger children will find it more difficult to understand it than older children.
2. Children that have the habit of watching animated films will be able to understand this specific information more easily.

3. Children will find cultural references translated via foreignisation difficult to understand.
4. Children will not be able to understand untranslated plot-related songs.

### 3.1. Participants

Given the difficulty to recruit population samples, experimental studies involving children are usually carried out in contexts like education, social services or health care, where participants can be more easily enlisted (Greig *et al.* 2007: 103). In this particular case, 163 participants were recruited in two state primary schools in Valencia (83) and Granada (80), Spain, and divided into two groups according to their year in school: 74 children from Year 4 (8-9 years old) and 89 children from Year 7 (11-12 years old), which is the last year of primary school education in Spain.

This specific age range (8-12 years old) corresponds to the beginning and end of the concrete operational stage of Piaget's (1956) theory of cognitive development, according to which children in this age bracket are able to convey and understand basic messages in their own mother tongue, both in oral and written form. Since they had different levels of cognitive development, the objective was to test whether there were any main differences in comprehension across the groups. This age range also coincides with the emergence of children's "filmic intelligence" (de Andrés Tripero 2006), which should thus enable participants to consciously think about the information provided in the audiovisual text.

As for the demographic information, sex distribution was almost identical, with boys accounting for 51% and girls for 49% and they all spoke Spanish as their mother tongue.

### 3.2. Materials

Nine video excerpts from various US films dubbed into Spanish were selected for the experiment:

- three from Disney/Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (Stanton and Unkrich 2004), an underwater road movie about a fish trying to find his son;
- three from Dreamworks' *Rise of the Guardians* (Ramsey 2012), based on the lives of Jack Frost and the Immortal Guardians, well-known characters associated with the popular traditions of Santa Claus, the Sandman, the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny; and
- three from Blue Sky's *Rio* (Saldanha 2011), a romantic comedy set in Rio de Janeiro about two endangered bird species.

Each clip was a self-contained scene and included one or more examples of translation solutions frequently found in dubbed animated films for children. All clips lasted between one and three minutes, with a total duration of

around 20 minutes, which is in line with scholars' recommendations when doing research with children (Marta Lazo 2005; de Andrés Tripero 2006).

All participants were asked to complete the same pen-and-paper questionnaire relating to the clips. This tool was designed combining both open and multiple-choice questions and contained 27 questions divided into four sections: one covering demographic and general information, and the other three testing children's comprehension, one for each film in the corpus. The aim of comprehension questions was to gauge the extent to which participants were able to understand the content of the clips. Although the questionnaire was in Spanish, a version in English is annexed to this paper (Appendix 1).

The questionnaire included nine questions about cultural references (eight transferred via foreignisation and one via domestication), nine examples of linguistic and iconographic interaction, where the verbal information is semiotically complemented by the images, four examples of educational content (one transferred via the strategy of explicitation and three via non-explicitation), two examples of multilingualism and two examples of plot-related songs, of which one was dubbed and the other one had been left untranslated.

Since children were supposed to complete the task on their own, the questionnaire was not very extensive – only 19 out of 27 questions focus on comprehension – and it was adapted to their level of cognitive development by including pictures that could help the youngest participants complete it. Following recommendations from Kellet and Ding (2004) and Greig *et al.* (2007), most of the questions were closed and written in a simple and direct way in order to minimise distraction.

The experiment was carried out within small groups of 5 to 10 children at a time so that the procedure could be better explained to them and any potential doubts resolved. In order to emulate the cinema experience, the film clips were screened in the schools' audiovisual classrooms, where participants completed the different sections of the questionnaire immediately after watching each of the clips. In order to fit within the class timetable and respect other school-related commitments, no session of the experiment exceeded 55 minutes.

### **3.3. Design and variables**

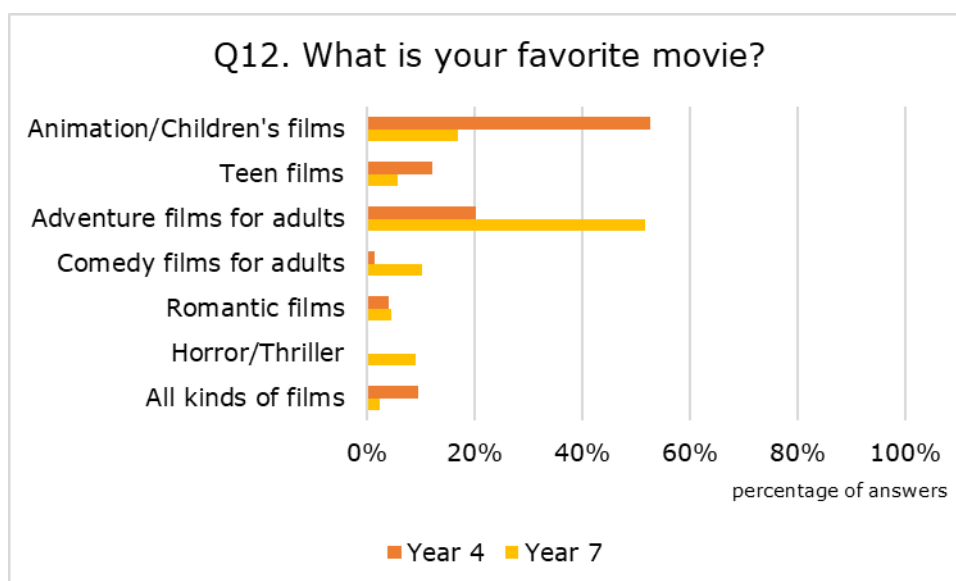
The study used a between-subjects design, for which two independent variables were established. First, participants' year in school, 4 or 7, so that the eventual differences and similarities in the reception of the dubbed audiovisual texts between children at the beginning and the end of the concrete operational stage could be explored. Second, the number of previous viewings of the films was elicited (0, 1, 2-5, 6-10, more than 10),

in an attempt to check whether having previously watched the films could have an influence on the results. It was hypothesised that these two independent variables could have an impact on the dependent variable: the comprehension score drawing on questions based on the different translation solutions.

To establish an association between the dependent and independent variables, the Chi-square test was used. For example, it can be assumed that an association exists between the dependent variables dealing with knowledge of intercultural issues and the independent variable 'year', since more cognitive development on the part of the participants should lead to better comprehension of cultural references. Likewise, an association can be expected between the dependent variables and the independent variable 'number of viewings' because, if children have previously watched the films, they should encounter fewer difficulties in understanding the cultural references. The results of the Chi-square tests that show some statistically significant associations between the variables are presented next to each of the relevant questions.

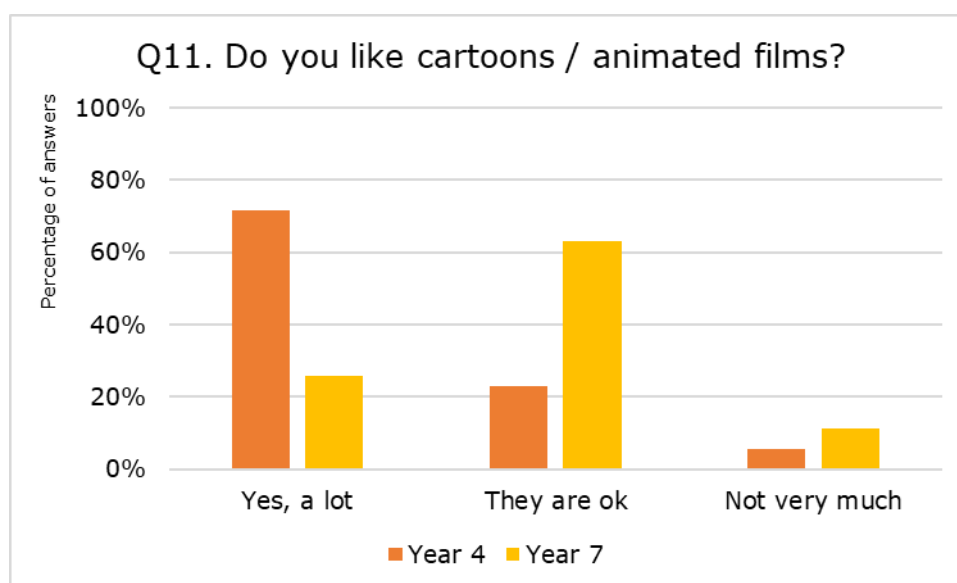
#### **4. Results**

The first part of the questionnaire (questions Q1 to Q12) focused on participants' interest in films in general, and animated films in particular. Although the data presented below are only representative of this particular study and cannot be extrapolated to the entire child population in Spain, the sample allows for the depiction of some trends. For instance, it can be broadly stated that children like films as a medium of popular entertainment, either in movie theatres or at home. As regards their film preferences, Q12 asked participants to name their favourite movie and every answer was then classified into a film genre. As shown in Figure 1, young children's favourite genres seem to be animated/children's films, while older children prefer adventure films for adults, such as *The Hunger Games* (Ross 2012) or *The Fast and the Furious* franchise (Thompson 2011-present):



**Figure 1. Children's favourite film genres / Year in school**

These results are in line with Q11, in which children were asked if they liked cartoons and animated films, as shown in Figure 2:



**Figure 2. Children's interest in animated films / Year in school**

The results concerning children's comprehension of educational content, colloquial language, cultural references and songs are presented in the following sections.

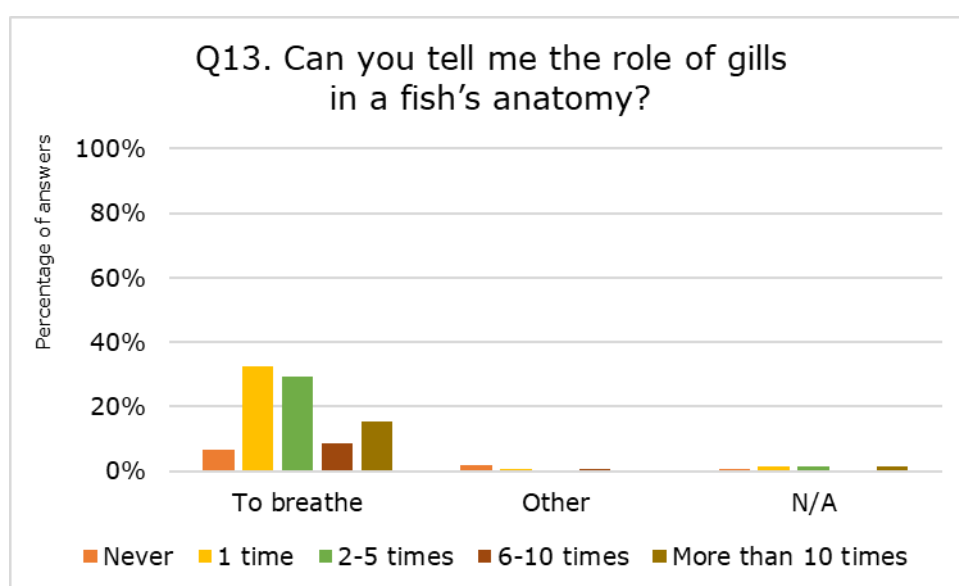
#### **4.1. Responses to educational content**

As part of their educational value, films can help children acquire new encyclopaedic knowledge as content about history, geography or wildlife is frequently found in children's films, either explicitly or implicitly. When it comes to translation, this content needs to be explained on occasions if

children are to understand it. However, since adding new information to the dubbed dialogue track is a rather complex task because of the technical limitations of this translation mode, TTs rarely provide explanations for educational content (de los Reyes Lozano 2017), thus jeopardising children's comprehension.

This study included four questions directly calling on children's educational background (Q13, Q15, Q16, Q17a), all from the *Finding Nemo* clips. The Chi-square test showed a significant association between the children's year in school and their answers in two of the four dependent variables (Q15,  $X^2(4, N = 163) = 16.532, p = .002$ ; Q16,  $X^2(3, N = 163) = 20.093, p < .000$ ), and between the number of viewings and their answers in only one case (Q13,  $X^2(8, N = 163) = 19.53, p = .012$ ).

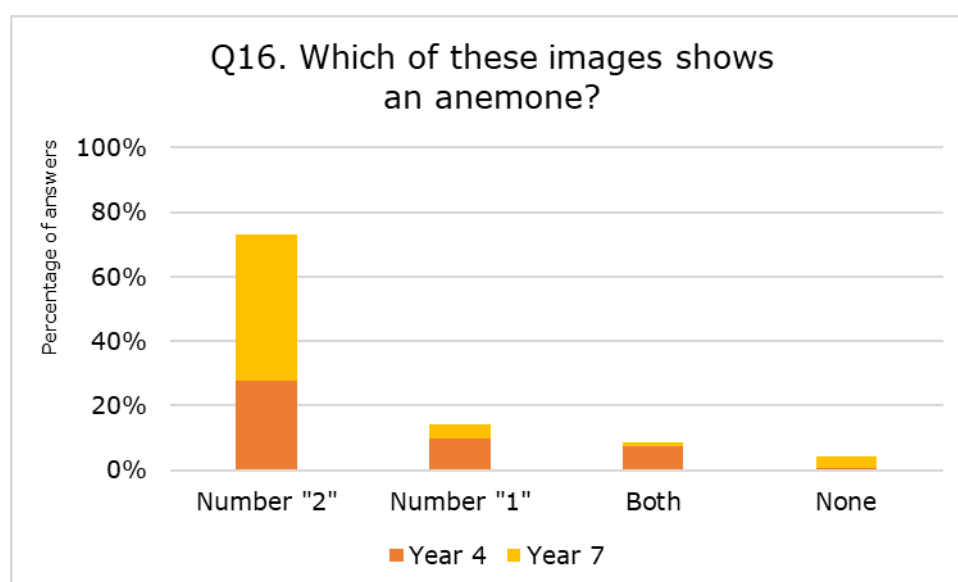
Q13 was an open question about marine biology whose aim was to test participants' comprehension of an expression in which the term *branquias* [gills] was being used. This word only appears in the dubbed version as part of a reformulation of the English phrasal unit 'a fish can breathe out of here' into the Spanish *aire fresco para nuestras branquias* [fresh air for our gills]. In the question, children were directly asked to explain the role of gills in a fish's anatomy and answers such as 'to breathe', 'to breathe underwater' or any other similar formula were accepted as an indication that they had been able to understand the scene. The results indicate that nearly 93% of respondents from both years 4 and 7 answered correctly, largely validating the dubbing choice to include this high register term in the TT. However, it seems that having previously watched the film has an impact on the results (see Figure 3), because only 11 of the 151 participants who answered accurately had never seen the film, and the relationship between the variables was statistically significant:  $X^2(8, N = 163) = 19.53, p = 0.012$ .



**Figure 3. Role of gills in a fish's anatomy / Number of viewings**



Q16 was based on the participants' ability to recognise an anemone in an image. In a previous experimental study with children, Arillo *et al.* (2013: 149) observed that primary school students were not familiar with this marine species. Since it serves as a home to Nemo and his father and the word 'anemone' is uttered in the clips, we wanted to test whether children had acquired this vocabulary item through watching the film. In the question, they were presented with two different screenshots from the film, one of which included an anemone, and were asked to recognise the animal. The results to this question are presented in Figure 4 below: 73% of participants (119 out of 163) chose the right picture ('Number 2'), 28% of whom were from Year 4 and 45% from Year 7. These findings, along with the results from the Chi-square test ( $\chi^2(3, N = 163) = 20.093$ ,  $p < .000$ ), seem to confirm our initial assumption about the importance of age in the comprehension of educational content in children's films.

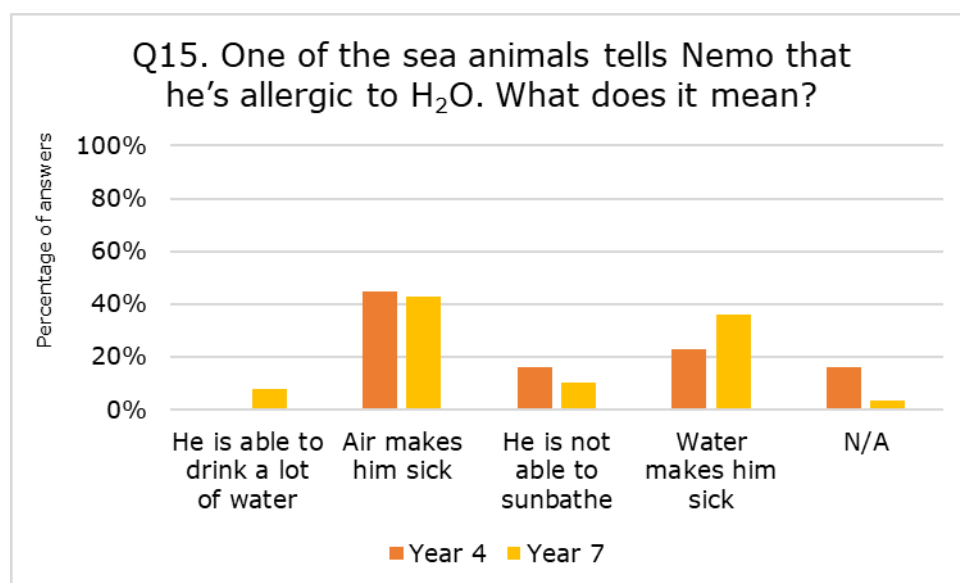


**Figure 4. Image including an anemone / Year in school**

Encyclopaedic knowledge may also be crucial to understand certain comic scenes. In another clip from *Finding Nemo*, a group of sea animals are engaged in conversation about medical problems, when a seahorse sneezes and states that he is 'H<sub>2</sub>O-intolerant'. Although the Spanish dubbed version changes the intolerance to a different condition, whereby the seahorse becomes *alérgico al H<sub>2</sub>O* [allergic to H<sub>2</sub>O], the chemical formula of water is kept in the TT. The initial assumption was that only students from Year 7 would be able to identify the formula and, consequently, understand the highly paradoxical situation of a seahorse being allergic/intolerant to water.

As shown in Figure 5, a substantial number of Year 4 students (33 out of 74 = 45%) opted for the wrong answer, 'Air makes him sick', in multiple-choice question Q15, while only a quarter (17 out of 74 = 23%) selected the right answer, i.e. 'Water makes him sick'. Surprisingly, just over a third

of Year 7 students (32 out of 89 = 36%) succeeded in choosing the correct answer, while the remaining 57 (64%) opted for a different answer:



**Figure 5. Meaning of allergic to H<sub>2</sub>O / Year in school**

Although the relationship between the children's year in school and their answers to this question was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 (4, N = 163) = 16.532, p = .002$ ), overall only 49 out of 163 respondents (30%) were able to understand the seahorse's allergy. Seeing that such a high proportion of participants failed to recognise the formula, it can be assumed that the comic effect went amiss, as it derives from encyclopaedic knowledge that they did not have.

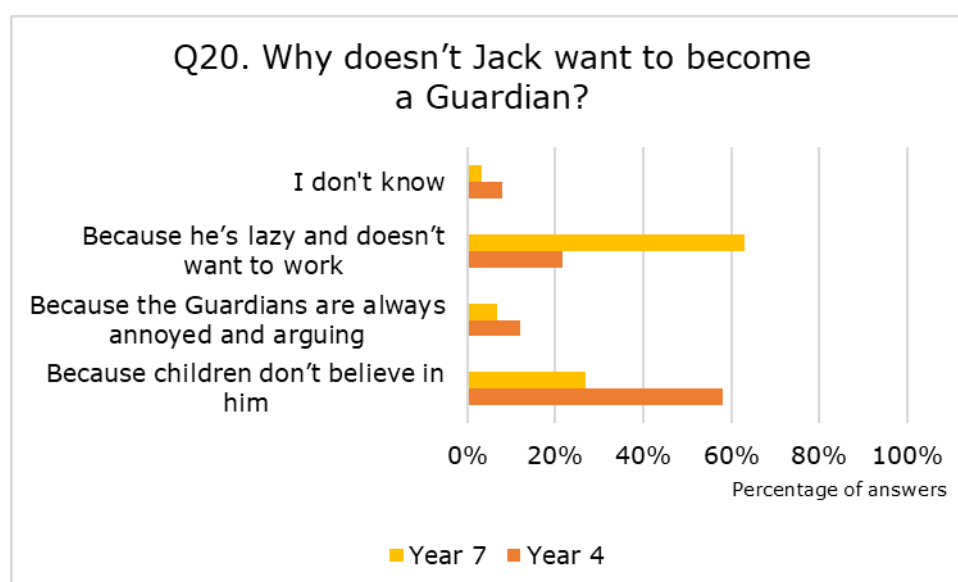
#### 4.2. Responses to colloquial language

In an attempt to emulate the audience's natural way of speaking, children's films tend to make substantive use of colloquial language, which is also maintained and recreated in the dubbed versions in Spain (de los Reyes Lozano 2017). The questionnaire included four closed questions about colloquial language (Q14, Q19, Q20, Q26) to determine whether participants were able to understand communicative situations relying on colloquial expressions and sarcastic statements, since irony and sarcasm can also be activated through colloquial language. The Chi-square test showed that the children's year in school had an impact on the answers in three of the four questions: Q14,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 163) = 9.249, p = .010$ ; Q20,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 163) = 28.068, p < .000$ ; Q26,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 163) = 23.840, p < .000$ . The number of viewings was not significantly related to the children's answers.

In a scene from *Rise of the Guardians*, immature teenager Jack Frost declines the Guardians' invitation to become one of them. As an excuse, he resorts to some colloquial terms in Spanish that are associated with professional life such as *curro* [job] for 'hard work' or *prisas* [rush] for

'deadlines'. He then gets into a battle of words with Easter Bunny and makes fun of Easter traditions. At the end of the scene, Bunny has the last word and hurts Jack's pride as he reminds him that he is invisible to children and that they do not believe in him. During their fight, both characters use colloquial terms and expressions, which are maintained or even reinforced in the TT: *iGuaaau!* [Wow], 'you gotta be kidding me' becomes *qué pasada* [it's brill(iant)], 'we just dodged a bullet' is dubbed as *nos hemos librado de una buena* [we just got out of a problem], and 'clown' is literally transferred as *payaso* [clown].

It can be argued that this kind of language in Spanish, as well as Jack's use of sarcasm, would prevent some children from understanding the communicative situation, especially the younger ones. Closed question Q20 presented four different options to describe Jack's reasons for not wanting to become a Guardian:



**Figure 6. Jack's reason for not being a Guardian / Year in school**

Jack's sarcastic monologue was understood by the majority (63%) of Year 7 students, who chose the option 'Because he's lazy and doesn't want to work', whereas 58% of students from Year 4 opted for the wrong answer and chose 'Because children don't believe in him', which is not the reason of declining the Guardians' invitation. The relationship between the variables was statistically significant ( $X^2(3, N = 163) = 28.068, p < .000$ ) and it may be deduced that by not having understood the character's sarcasm and way of talking, younger participants ended up associating Jack's decision with the final dramatic scene, where Bunny tells him that he is 'invisible'.

In one of the clips from *Rio*, a conversation takes place between the protagonist, Blu, a male macaw who is transported to Brazil to mate with a female, and his sidekicks, two local birds with expertise in urban speech.

Interestingly, the use of slang expressions seems to be more creative in the dubbed version where standard substantives like 'tourist' or 'girl' have been translated in Spanish with the highly colloquial *guiri* [slang for tourist] and *pibita* [chick].

In their attempt to liberate Blu, who is willingly locked in a cage, the local birds seize the opportunity to give him some seduction tips, using colloquial expressions that are rather sensual and come accompanied by dance steps and chest or tail movements made by the birds:

Original dialogue	Dubbed version	Back translation
It's all about swagger.	<i>Lo que mola es fardar mogollón.</i>	It's cool to swagger big time.
You make the first move.	<i>Tú tienes que mandar.</i>	You need to be in command.
Pop out that chest, swing that tail.	<i>El pecho tienes que hinchar, la colita menear.</i>	You need to swell your chest, swing your tail.
Brazilian ladies respond to confidence.	<i>A las brasileñas les van los tipos duros.</i>	Brazilian girls love tough guys.

Given the sexual nature of these expressions, the underlying assumption is that 8 and 9-year-old children (Year 4) will concentrate less on the seductive innuendo of the dialogue exchange and more on the birds' visual gags, manically trying to get Blu out of the cage. On the other hand, 11 and 12-year-old children (Year 7) are on the brink of adolescence and it is expected that they will be able to decipher the birds' topic of discussion. In closed question Q26, participants were presented with a selection of four options and asked to indicate the kind of tips that the birds were trying to give to Blu:

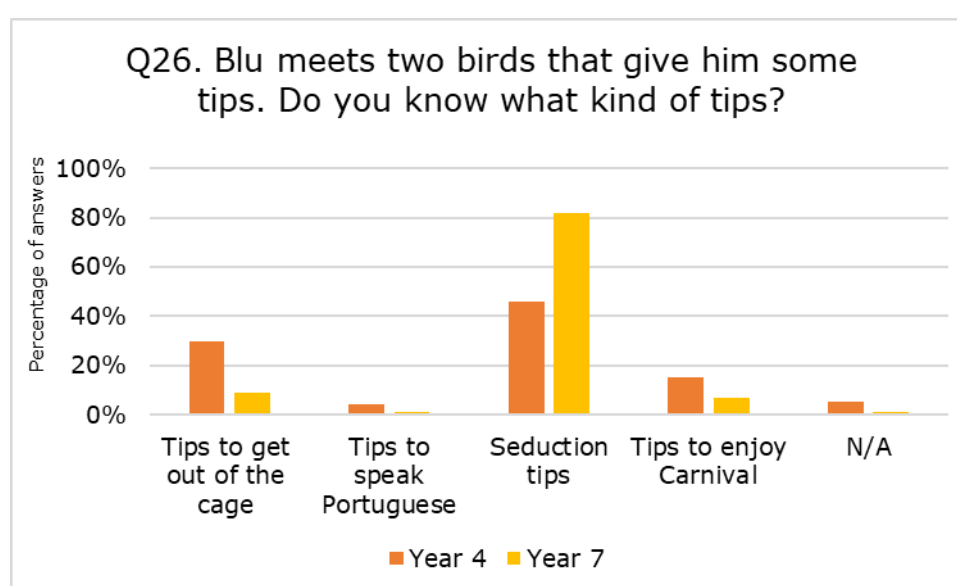


Figure 7. Comprehension of colloquial language / Year in school

As anticipated, most of the Year 7 students (73 out of 89 = 82%) understood the scene and chose the answer 'seduction tips', whereas only 34 out of 74 (46%) students from Year 4 selected the right answer. The relationship between the variables was statistically significant ( $Q26, \chi^2 (4, N = 163) = 23.840, p < .000$ ), thus confirming our initial hypothesis.

### 4.3. Responses to cultural references

Drawing on the results of previous studies (Martín Fernández 2008; Iglesias 2009; de los Reyes Lozano 2017), cultural references in children's films are frequently transferred from English into Spanish following a translation method based on foreignisation, with the assumed aim of enriching the children's cultural system, even at the risk of not being fully understood. In an attempt to shed some light on "what children actually understand, and how much 'foreignness' they can and do cope with" (O'Sullivan 2013: 453), our experiment included nine examples containing culture-specific references (Q17b, Q18a, Q18b, Q18c, Q18d, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q27), all of which were translated via foreignisation, except for Q22.

The Chi-square test showed that the children's school year was an important factor in six out of the nine questions, in which Year 7 students showed better performance than Year 4 students, thus confirming our initial hypothesis:

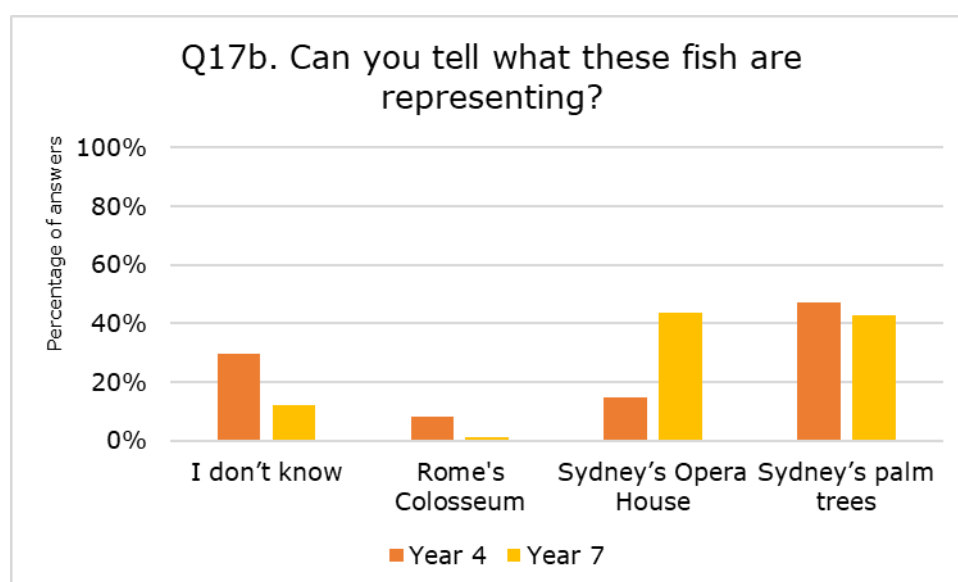
Question	$\chi^2$	df	N	p
Q17b - Can you tell what these fish are representing?	21.846	3	163	< .000
Q18a - Do you remember the name of these characters? (Sandman)	7.871	3	163	.049
Q18b - Can you state their missions as Guardians? (Sandman)	11.531	2	163	.003
Q18c - Do you remember the name of these characters? (Tooth Fairy)	11.363	3	163	.010
Q21 - Do you know in which country the Easter Bunny lives?	41.651	4	163	< .000
Q23 - In which country is the film <i>Rio</i> set?	13.277	4	163	.010

On the other hand, the number of viewings was significant in three cases, since students that had previously watched the films provided satisfactory answers to these questions:

Question	$\chi^2$	df	N	p
Q18b - Can you state their missions as Guardians? (Sandman)	21.543	8	163	.006
Q18d - Can you state their missions as Guardians? (Tooth Fairy)	30.151	8	163	< .000
Q23 - In which country is the film <i>Rio</i> set?	37.410	16	163	.002

In one of the clips from *Finding Nemo*, a specific cultural element is linked to the heroes' next destination. During the scene, an immense shoal of moonfish give the protagonists directions about how to get to Sydney, for which they represent Sydney's Opera House as a synecdoche of the city and mimic the sound of an opera singer at the same time. Q17 presented a screenshot of this particular scene and offered participants a list of four different options ('Rome's Colosseum', 'Sydney's Opera House', 'Sydney's palm trees' and 'I don't know') to help them identify the shape formed by the moonfish. Arguably, younger viewers will not be able to understand the reference proposed by the filmmakers. Nevertheless, as the name of the Australian city is heard several times in the clips, it was expected that the respondents would choose an option with the word 'Sydney' in it. Since cultural knowledge increases with age, it seems legitimate to assume that older children should be in a better position to answer the question correctly.

As expected, Figure 8 shows that only a few Year 4 students (11 out of 74 = 15%) were capable of recognising this iconic building. Nearly half of them (35 out of 74 = 47%) opted for the palm tree option, probably because of the figure's resemblance to that plant. Although Year 7 students obtained better scores, the Opera House option was selected by only 39 out of 89 (44%) and many of them also opted for the palm tree answer (38 out of 89 = 43%). Although the relationship between the variables was statistically significant ( $X^2(3, N = 163) = 21.846, p < .000$ ), only 30% of all groups chose the right answer, a very low percentage, which calls into question not only how much, but also the kind of foreignness that children can cope with.



**Figure 8. Cultural reference in *Finding Nemo* / Year in school**

As another example, open question Q18 asked about two culture-specific characters from *Rise of the Guardians*: the Sandman and the Tooth Fairy.

The former is the mythical character responsible for putting children to sleep in some cultures. While his name in English refers to the sandy appearance of the substance that forms in the eyes when people sleep, the Spanish translation describes his mission as a Guardian and calls him *Creador de sueños* [Creator of dreams] or *Sandy*. The Tooth Fairy, on the other hand, brings money to kids when they lose their baby teeth and has been literally translated as *Hada de los dientes*. Since the Spanish dubbed version does not offer any additional information, we tried to find out how much the participants knew about these characters by directly asking them about their name and mission. Our initial assumption was that even if Spanish children are not familiar with these characters, the scene context may help them understand their role, thereby making any additional information superfluous.

When given a picture of the characters and asked about who they were, a large majority of respondents (71%) were able to identify the Tooth Fairy, providing the names of *Hada* [Fairy] or *Hada de los dientes* [Tooth Fairy]; however, the same cannot be said for the Sandman, since only 54% wrote *Sandy* or *Creador de sueños* [Creator of dreams]. Again, age seems to be a determining factor ( $X^2(3, N = 163) = 7.871, p = .049$ ), because more than half of Year 4 students (42 out of 74 = 57%) were not able to indicate the name of the character and, instead, they wrote different names and sentences expressing doubt, such as 'I don't know' or 'I don't remember'.

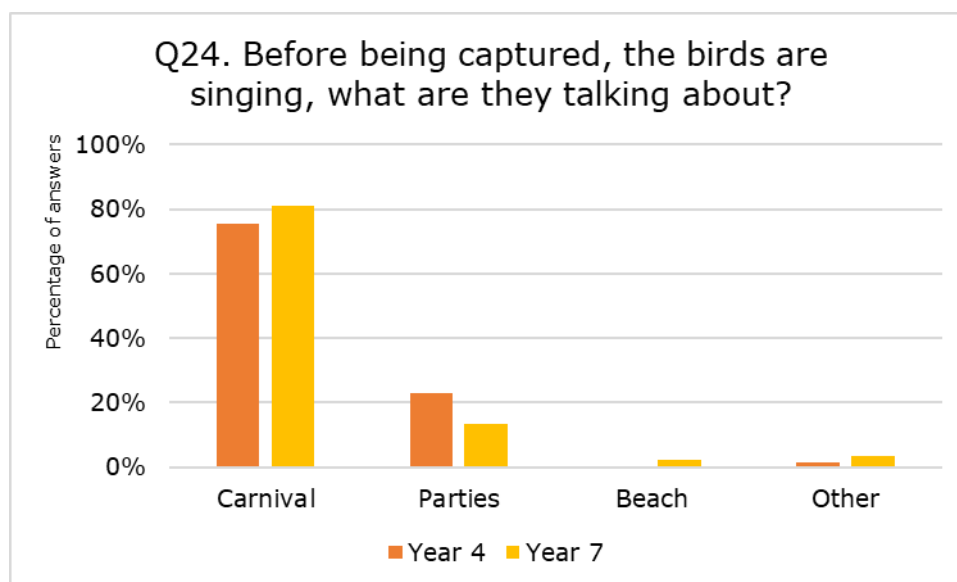
When asked about these characters' mission as Guardians, 60% of Year 7 students provided a satisfactory answer to both questions. However, only a few students from Year 4 (25 out of 74 = 34%) managed to recognise the Sandman's job by providing answers like 'creates dreams', 'puts the children to sleep' and similar, while the rest of them (66%) failed to offer a correct answer. The Chi-square test confirmed that the relationship was statistically significant ( $X^2(2, N = 163) = 11.531, p = .003$ ).

#### 4.4. Responses to songs

Songs, both diegetic and non-diegetic, are frequently used in children's films. In the dubbed versions of these films, since young audiences are not used to reading subtitles, the songs tend to be either dubbed, whereby the new lyrics are adapted to the original music (e.g. diegetic songs in musical comedies), or they are left untranslated, even if this means losing essential information (e.g. incidental pop songs). This decision may be conditioned by extratextual factors as, on occasions, the lyrics cannot be translated because the distributor has not managed to secure the permission from the owners of the copyright to do so. An example of each strategy was included in the experiment, in Q24 and Q25 respectively.

The opening sequence from *Rio* is a samba-like musical number that has been dubbed in the Spanish version. The song is about the upcoming

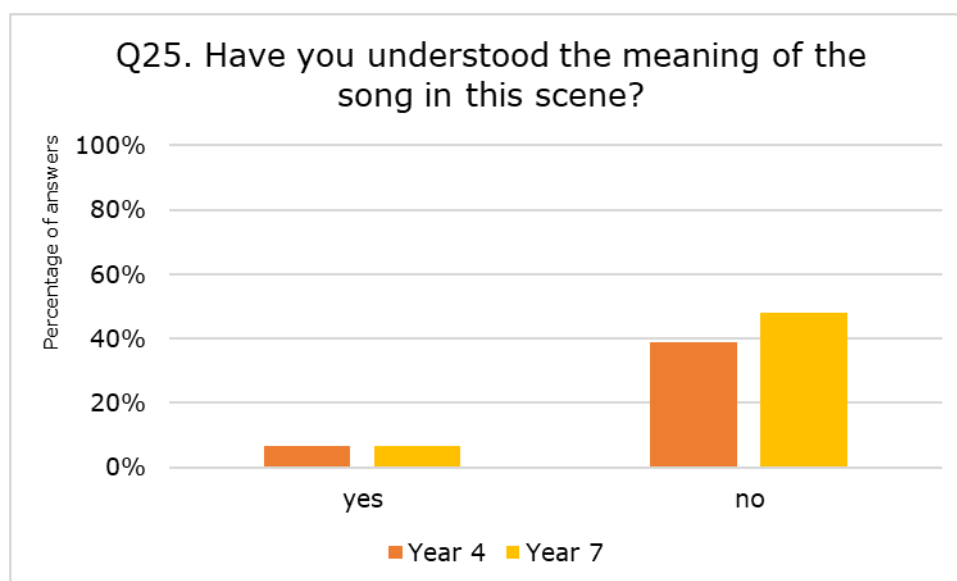
carnival celebration and revolves around some of the most iconic images of Brazil, such as Sugarloaf Mountain, samba or carnival itself. In closed question Q24, participants had the opportunity to choose what they thought the upcoming event was from among the four options provided ('carnival', 'beach', 'party' and 'other'). The findings show that most respondents from both years (76% in Year 4 and 81% in Year 7) chose the right answer, as displayed in Figure 9:



**Figure 9. Comprehension of a dubbed song / Year in school**

On the other hand, the pop hit *Let Me Take You to Rio*, performed in English and Portuguese when the film's heroes arrive to the so-called 'wonderful city' and discover its streets, beaches and landscapes, has been left untranslated in the Spanish dubbed version of the film. As such, children who do not understand these languages would find it difficult to know exactly what the song is about. In this regard, twofold open question Q25 directly asked participants if they were able to understand the untranslated song and, if so, they were prompted to summarise its main topic. Our assumption that a large majority would not be able to do it is confirmed by the results, as shown in Figure 10. Indeed, 86.5% of respondents were not able to understand the main topic of the song and, although 22 out of 163 (14%) stated the contrary, only one came close to it when mentioning that the song meant *déjame llevarte a Río* [let me take you to Rio].





**Figure 10. Comprehension of an untranslated song / Year in school**

The second part of the question tried to tease out children's opinion about this non-translation strategy: 80% of those participants who confessed not to have followed the message mentioned that they wished they could have understood the lyrics, while 4% stated they did not want to know and 16% were indifferent. Once more, such a high percentage should not be neglected and, since this song was actually written for the film, AVT agents should perhaps do more to take the audience characteristics into account, as well as their limitations, and consequently adapt the target text to the child's specific needs.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The present study was intended to empirically investigate children's reactions to some of the translation solutions regularly adopted in animated films dubbed in Spain from English. The main hypothesis of the experiment was that in dubbing, the degree of adaptation plays a decisive role in children's reception of cultural references, colloquial language, educational content and songs. In this section, we will determine whether the results obtained can confirm or reject the four initially formulated sub-hypotheses.

The first sub-hypothesis was that age is a relevant factor influencing the comprehension of some elements. Indeed, students from Year 4 had more trouble answering 11 out of the 19 comprehension questions correctly, which was shown by the Chi-square results, thus confirming this sub-hypothesis. Among these questions, there were five examples of cultural references translated in a foreignising manner, three examples in which colloquial language is maintained or reinforced and one instance in which the educational content is also maintained. Our experiment has demonstrated that certain content in children's films seems to be aimed at an audience with high cognitive abilities, which in turn means that not all

viewers are able to decipher it. Younger children are therefore missing some information and audiovisual translators may want to consider adapting the TT to the child recipient in order to comply with the formative role of these films (Lorenzo 2014), either by leaving the terms and providing additional information, or by modifying or removing specific content.

Having previously watched the films does not appear to be a determining factor in children's ability to identify and understand these elements, thus rejecting sub-hypothesis (2). In the experiment, the Chi-square test showed that this variable was only relevant in four of the 19 questions: one concerning educational content and three focused on cultural references alien to the target culture (two folkloric characters and one regional cliché). This would indicate that, despite having the habit of watching audiovisual content, the ability to pay attention and acquire new knowledge through audiovisual media is still limited in children.

Sub-hypothesis (3), regarding the comprehension of cultural references, is also rejected, since most of these were maintained in the TT by adopting a translation method based on foreignisation and five of the eight examples included in the experiment were identified by over half of the participants. It has been observed that transferring some concrete cultural content literally, such as popular characters or international clichés, does not make it difficult for young children to follow the story on the whole. In this experiment, participants were able to identify some of the foreign references, thus showing a certain degree of social acceptance of foreignised translations. Having said that, further reception experiments are needed to confirm or refute these findings and, as O'Sullivan (2013) requests, to inform current speculation about audience needs.

Finally, it has been noted that children understand songs and musical numbers when they are translated. So, while a large majority of participants succeeded in choosing the right answer for the main topic of the dubbed song, the same cannot be said when it comes to untranslated songs, since none of them was able to correctly state what the musical number was about, thus confirming sub-hypothesis (4). It thus appears that the decision to leave a song untranslated may negatively influence the audience's comprehension of the scene.

In light of the results yielded by this experiment, it is clear that the ability to understand intercultural and encyclopaedic content in children's films depends largely on both the age of the audience and their cognitive development. Hence, the decisions taken during the translation process can negatively influence film comprehension if they produce solutions that are outside of the cultural environment surrounding the children.

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## Filmography

- *Finding Nemo [Buscando a Nemo]* (2003) dir. Andrew Stanton & Lee Unkrich, script Andrew Stanton, Bob Peterson & David Reynolds, Disney-Pixar, 1 h 42, trans. Lucía Rodríguez. DVD, 2004, The Walt Disney Company Iberia.
- *Rio [Rio]* (2011) dir. Carlos Saldanha, script Don Rhymer *et al.*, Blue Sky, 1 h 36, trans. Josep Llurba. DVD, 2012, Twentieth Century Fox.
- *Rise of the Guardians [El origen de los Guardianes]* (2012) dir. Peter Ramsey, script David Lindsay-Abaire, Dreamworks, 1 h 37, trans. Kenneth Post. DVD, 2013, Paramount Pictures.

## Appendix 1. Questionnaire

### SECTION A

Personal data

1. What is your name? .....
2. Where do you live? .....
3. How old are you? .....
4. Which school year are you in? .....

### SECTION B

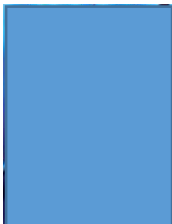
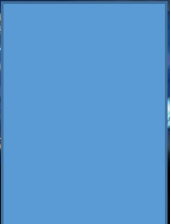
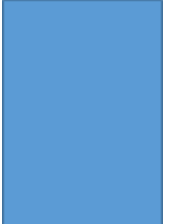
Now, answer these questions about cinema and films. Circle the chosen answer

5. Do you like watching films?  
a. Yes, a lot                      b. They are OK                      c. Not very much
6. How often do you watch films at home?  
a. Never                      b. Rarely                      c. Sometimes                      d. Very often                      e. Every day
7. How do you usually watch films at home?  
a. TV                      b. Tablet                      c. Computer
8. How often do you go to the cinema?  
a. Never                      b. Rarely                      c. Sometimes                      d. Very often                      e. Every day
9. Are there cinemas in your city or neighbourhood?                      YES                      NO
10. What is your favourite film?

### SECTION C

Circle the chosen answer

11. Do you like cartoons/animated films?  
a. Yes, a lot                      b. They are OK                      c. Not very much
12. Do you know these films? State those already seen and how many times:  

<input type="checkbox"/> FINDING NEMO 	<input type="checkbox"/> RISE OF THE GUARDIANS 	<input type="checkbox"/> RIO 
<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time <input type="checkbox"/> 2-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 times	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time <input type="checkbox"/> 2-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 times	<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time <input type="checkbox"/> 2-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 times

## SECTION D

Answer these questions about *Finding Nemo***13. Can you tell me the role of the gills in a fish's anatomy?****14. Why are Coral and Marlin so happy?**

- a. They're going to have babies and they'll be able to see whales whenever they want to
- b. They're going to have babies and they found a beautiful place to live
- c. They were living in a horrible place before
- d. I don't know

**15. One of the sea animals tells Nemo that he's allergic to H<sub>2</sub>O. What does this mean?**

- a. He is able to drink a lot of water
- b. Air makes him sick
- c. He is not able to sunbathe
- d. Water makes him sick

**16. Which of these images shows an anemone?**

1.



2.



- a. Number 2
- b. Number 1
- c. Both
- d. Neither

**17. Can you tell what these fish are representing?**

- a. A seahorse
- b. An octopus
- c. A whale
- d. A clownfish



- a. I don't know
- b. Rome's Colosseum
- c. Sydney's Opera House
- d. Sydney's palm trees

## SECTION E

Answer these questions about *Rise of the Guardians*

**18. Do you remember the name of these characters? Can you state their missions as Guardians?**

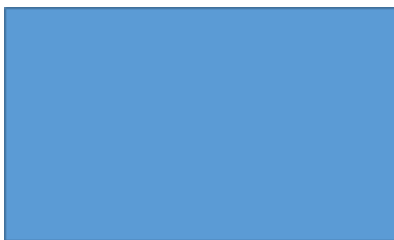


Name: .....

Mission: .....

.....

.....



Name: .....

Mission: .....

.....

.....

**19. When Jack Frost meets the Guardians...**

- a. He's angry because he doesn't like the North Pole
- b. He's happy because he loves the North Pole
- c. He's angry because he has been shoved in a sack and tossed through a portal
- d. He's happy because he has been shoved in a sack and tossed through a portal

## SECTION F

**20. Why doesn't Jack want to become a Guardian?**

- a. Because children don't believe in him
- b. Because the Guardians are always annoyed and arguing
- c. Because he's lazy and doesn't want to work
- d. I don't know

**21. Do you know in which country the Easter Bunny lives?**

- a. Argentina
- b. United States of America
- c. Australia
- d. Mexico

**22. The fairies travel the world searching for teeth when they encounter their European colleague, a mouse. In which country do they meet? How do you know?**



a. France, because .....

b. Spain, because.....

c. Italy, because.....

d. Germany, because.....



## SECTION G

Answer these questions about *Rio*

**23. In which country is the film *Rio* set?**

- a. Portugal
- b. Panama
- c. Canada
- d. Brazil

**24. Before being captured, the birds are singing. What are they talking about?**

- a. Carnival
- b. Parties
- c. Beach
- d. Other: .....

## SECTION H

**25. Have you understood the meaning of the song in this scene?**

- a. YES: .....
- b. NO. In this case, would you like to know what it says?
  - a. yes
  - b. no
  - c. I don't care

**26. Blu meets two birds that give him some tips. Do you know what kind of tips?**

- a. Tips to get out of the cage
- b. Tips to speak Portuguese
- c. Seduction tips
- d. Tips to enjoy Carnival

**27. When they meet, the bird explains that his name is similar to a cheese that has mould on it and smells really bad. Can you state the name of this kind of cheese?**

.....



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## **Biography**



Julio de los Reyes Lozano received his PhD in Translation Studies in 2015 from the Universities Jaume I of Castellón, Spain, and Reims-Champagne-Ardenne, France. After seven years teaching Specialised Translation, Interpreting and Spanish for Specific Purposes at the University of Lille, France, he is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the TRAMA group of the Universitat Jaume I of Castellón. His main research interest is audiovisual translation, particularly the translation of children's films and their reception.

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